Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

MHR Connections

Published by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission

Volume 12 Number 12 December 2012

Award recipients inspire with both their work and words

While accepting the Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba, recipient Louise Simbandumwe admitted that it would have been very difficult for her family to have ended up in Canada if today's changing immigration rules were in place at that time. It is just one of the reasons the *Immigration Matters in Canada Coalition* was formed. Ms Simbandumwe played a lead role in forming this group of community members based in Winnipeg who care about the wellbeing and fair treatment of refugees and immigrants in Canada.

Louise Simbandumwe spoke of a just and humane world.

Jane Burpee, with her family, had a message of hope.

Chad Smith, with Cassondra Campbell of the CHRC, said it was an honour to accept the award on behalf of the Rainbow Resource Centre.

Ms Simbandumwe says she is proud to be a part of the coalition, which she believes is making a difference and thanked the activist community in Winnipeg that addresses injustice and opens up opportunities allowing people to live to their fullest potential.

Louise is the second generation of her family to receive the Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba. Early in her acceptance remarks she called her mother to join her.

"My mother is my inspiration. She held our family together after finding out that her father, brothers and sisters had been killed." The family was massacred in the Burundi genocide. Louise's mother, Marceline Ndayumvire was the recipient of the 2005 Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba.

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THE MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

LA COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DU MANITOBA

www.manitobahumanrights.ca

The Rights Connection
by Jerry Woods - Chairperson

As 2012 draws to a close, we look to the future and reflect on the past year.

Our *Human Rights Code* turned 25 years old in 2012 and it is important to recognize that when it was proclaimed on December 10, 1987, it was ahead of its time by adding the protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

And then on June 14 of this year, amendments to *The Code* built on that legacy. Manitobans are now also protected from discrimination based on gender identity and disadvantaged social status.

To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of *The Code*, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission has published a *Report to the Community*, which can be found on our website.

This year the Commission also concluded the Racialized Communities and Police Services (RCAPS) Project. Although change between the relationship of some communities and the Winnipeg Police is considered too slow by some, most agree that communication is improving, especially at the leadership level. The final RCAPS Project Report is also posted on our website.

The Commission hosted the 2012 Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA) Conference. We called the Conference "Are We There Yet"? A resounding no was the general answer but the purpose of the title was also to look at the journey and how far we have come. For example when you consider the rancour and controversy surrounding the addition of sexual orientation as a protected characteristic against discrimination in 1987 to the gains of the Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Transgendered and Two Spirited (GLBTT) community today, we have travelled a long way.

As Executive Director of the Rainbow Resource Centre Chad Smith however, told those gathered at the Human Rights Award Reception, having the same rights as all Canadians does not mean that homophobia does not exist, and for many especially youth, the struggle remains. This can be said about other areas protected by *The Code* including mental and physical disability, sex, age, ancestry and religion.

When we look to the future, we turn towards our youth and the remarkable projects they undertake. As we enter into 2013, I congratulate all who have worked towards promoting respect for human rights.

Muuxi Adam, with his son, thanked his family for their love and support.

Estelle Lamoureux, a Board member with MARL, gives Chelsea Caldwell her Sybil Shack Award.

Ayla and Van Hamilton won over the guests at the reception with their "Kids Helping Kids" campaign.

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Jane Burpee was also a recipient of the 2012 Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba. Ms Burpee is a champion of public education when it comes to understanding mental illness and, in particular dispelling the myths and stigma surrounding Schizophrenia. Her message was one of hope and talked about the people with mental illness she has worked with over the years. "They are the most courageous people I have ever met. This is for them," she said concluding her acceptance remarks.

Individuals were not the only recipients. The Rainbow Resource Centre also received the Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba. This well known organization is a major resource and support centre serving Manitoba's Gay, Lesbian, Bi Sexual, Transgendered and Two Spirited GLBTT communities.

Executive Director Chad Smith accepted the award on behalf of the Rainbow Resource Centre and explained why there is a continuing need for organizations like the Centre. "There is a belief in Canada that because we have the same rights we have achieved equality. Not so...homophobia still exists in Canada and many, including our youth are still struggling."

The three recipients of the Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award encouraged young people to get involved.

Muuxi Adam, a young, Somali refugee who came to Winnipeg in late 2004 has since been involved in working with the newcomer communities in Winnipeg focusing mainly on settlement issues, gang and street crime prevention and employment opportunities for newcomer youth. Muuxi is currently the After School Program Coordinator at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba Inc. At the human rights reception he was the first of the young award recipients to suggest that everyone consider being a volunteer. Chelsea Caldwell echoed that sentiment by stating, "Why not engage yourself and get involved."

Chelsea is a third year student at the University of Winnipeg. In her second year of university, Chelsea was elected to the position of Status of Women Director for the University of Winnipeg Students' Association. She is a Co-Chair for the Global College Student Advisory Council, has also been on the planning committees for the 2011 Take Back the Night March, the 2012 International Women's Day March, and International Women's Week activities. She is also helping to form the Winnipeg chapter for Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, a new group, Manitoba Women Moving Forward, formerly known as UNIFEM, and volunteers for the local chapter of Canadian Women for Women of Afghanistan.

The inspirational messages by the recipients of the awards did not end there. Ayla and Van Hamilton of Major Pratt School, Russell Manitoba are among the youngest ever to receive the Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award. By accepting the award for their work to re-unite Filipino families Ayla said, "My hope is for a world that people can live as we do. All kids have great ideas and just need support to pursue them."

Artist Jayne Nixon created the glass artwork Commitment Award saying that "The strength and placement of colour and the position of the flame reveal the individual path that each recipient has taken towards human rights."

With the growing number of Filipino men and women in Russell, Manitoba who have left their children back in the Philippines, Ayla and Van felt there was a need to help them re-unite. With the support from their family, classmates and the Russell community, Ayla and Van raised over $21,000 for their "Kids Helping Kids" campaign. The money has been used to purchase airline tickets for travel and also to help with immigration costs.

The reception honouring the recipients was held on December 6, 2012 in celebration of International Human Rights Day. On behalf of our partners, the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties (MARL) and the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC), the Manitoba Human Rights Commission congratulates all the 2012 Human Rights Award recipients.

Commissioner recognized for her community work

Human Rights Commissioner Joan Hay has been awarded the Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal. Joan has a long history of service in Winnipeg's West End by working and volunteering for numerous Aboriginal and local community organizations. The awards, presented on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee, were presented by MP Pat Martin and recognized 30 people in Winnipeg Centre who have "dedicated themselves to making their community great."

HAPPY NEW YEAR